

La Follette writes a winning script

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STATE B.B. Tournament

By Don Lindstrom
State Journal sports reporter

Madison La Follette's basketball team followed its same old pressure-packed script Saturday night and now savors a Wisconsin Interscholastic Athletic Association state championship.

Rick Olson and Steve Amundson combined for 48 points as La Follette squeezed out a 62-61 victory over previously undefeated Stevens Point to capture the Class A championship at the 67th annual classic in the UW Field House.

Olson scored on four key jump shots and fed Scott Hogan with a go-ahead layup — all in the final 3 minutes, 15 seconds. Amundson then delivered the fatal blow to Point's hopes of

becoming the first unbeaten state champion since 1978 by hitting two free throws with four seconds left to give the Lancers a 62-59 lead.

"It's the same old story. We get a lead, lose it, and then come back. It's never easy, but we'll sure take this one," said La Follette Coach Pete Olson.

The game followed the same story line that has existed right down through regional, sectional and state competition.

In this one, La Follette scrambled to an eight-point lead in the third quarter, fell behind by three as Stevens Point's 6-foot-7 Jay Laszewski got hot, but rallied back in the waning minutes.

With 11,980 spectators watching the teams trade baskets and the lead, and as the clock

ticked into the final minute, the victory eluded Stevens Point on a costly turnover before Amundson went to the line.

La Follette had not missed a single free throw all night, and the pressure was on the 6-4 junior forward.

"Oh, man! Lots of pressure," exclaimed Amundson. "We never missed, and thank God I hit those two."

It was the Lancers' 20th victory in 25 games, and they earned their second state title in a six-year span.

La Follette also joined Wisconsin High as the only Madison teams ever to claim two state titles, and Pete Olson became the only city coach to have two state champions.

"We'll do anything to win," said Coach Olson.

"We were lucky, and this is really something when you can reward the kids with a moment like this."

Amundson, who went into the championship game shooting more than 72 percent from the field, enjoyed a marvelous finale. He hit nine of 14 shots and six free throws, but it was Olson who shook off a frosty-shooting start and led the Lancers down the stretch.

"He's a great player, and great players come to the top," said Stevens Point Coach John Schell of Olson.

"That's why they're great players. There was nothing he was doing differently against us, but if you're a real good player like he is, the

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MADISON LA FOLLETTE					
	fg	fga	ft	fta	reb
	pf	pts			
Scott Hogan	2	4	2	2	4
Steve Amundson	9	14	6	6	5
Tim Jordan	1	3	0	0	1
Tom Luksich	0	1	0	0	3
Rick Olson	10	25	4	4	2
Brian Hinzman	2	3	0	0	7
Bob DiLoreto	1	2	0	0	0
Brad Thering	0	1	0	0	0
Totals	25	53	12	12	26
STEVENS POINT					
	fg	fga	ft	fta	reb
	pf	pts			
Todd Barnes	7	14	5	5	5
Bill Gifford	3	5	0	0	3
Jay Laszewski	9	17	8	8	7
John Neppl	4	7	0	1	5
Keith Gostromski	0	2	2	2	4
Randy Gibb	0	1	0	0	1
Totals	23	46	15	16	26

Rebounding totals include team rebounds.

Madison La Follette	6	20	18	18	—	62
Stevens Point	10	12	17	22	—	61
Field goal percentages — La Follette .472, Stevens Point .500. Free throw percentages — La Follette 1.000, Stevens Point .938. Turnovers — La Follette 11, Stevens Point 16. Officials — Leon Jacques, Mike Dieters. Att. — 11,980.						

La Follette triumphs

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cream comes to the top."

Stevens Point was leading, 53-50, with 3:35 remaining just after Bill Gifford had hit a long jumper.

Then it turned into the Rick Olson story.

He pumped a long jumper at 3:15, then stole the ball and hit again for a 54-53 lead with 2:27 left.

Laszewski, who finished with 26 points — including 18 in the second half — countered with a pair of free throws, but again it was Olson on a jumper at 1:36 for a 56-55 lead. Laszewski, however, came right back with two more free throws.

Undaunted, the Big Eight player of the year nailed another jump shot with 67 seconds left, but Gifford gave Point its final lead, 59-58, just 18 seconds later.

Schell and his Wisconsin Valley Conference champions knew they had to stop Olson, but they couldn't. He zipped into the lane again, fed Hogan under the basket and the senior center layed in the eventual winner with 34 seconds remaining.

When the Panthers turned the ball over seconds later, La Follette went into its freeze with Olson controlling. Finally, Amundson drew the foul and iced the victory.

"That other kid (Amundson) just picked the right night," said Schell. "I don't know if he shot like that all year, but it was a great time to have such a great game."

La Follette shot .472 on 25 of 53

shots, but was a perfect 12-for-12 at the free throw line. Following 24-point performances for both Olson and Amundson, it was Hogan who added six.

Stevens Point also weathered a cold-shooting first half, but finished with an even 50 percent mark on 23 of 46 shots.

"It was a great tournament championship," said the La Follette coach. "I thought both teams played well. We thought we had the momentum going, but we just couldn't put it away. We always seem to make it a little tough."

The free throw shooting by both teams went into the record books. The pair clicked at .964 to break a 1965 record of .900 by Monroe and Brookfield Central.

Following Laszewski, Todd Barnes, an outstanding outside shooter, hit 19 to lead Stevens Point. Neppl wound up with eight.

Both teams seemed to feel the pressure in the opening quarter. La Follette got off to a 2-0 lead on Tim Jordan's basket, but the Panthers squeezed ahead, 10-6, as Olson encountered accuracy problems with six straight first-period misses.

The Lancers finally began to move when Olson flipped a pair of long shots and closed within two points, 14-12, but it wasn't until Amundson fired a corner jumper with 3:39 remaining in the half that La Follette took an 18-16 lead.

They kept it until halftime and went to intermission with a four-point advantage, 26-22.

In the third quarter, La Follette led all the way and once built an eight-

point margin, 30-22. Olson and Amundson accounted for 16 of the 18 points and the Lancers sailed into the final period with a 44-39 lead.

Stevens Point refused to die. The Panthers, with Neppl, Laszewski and Barnes scoring, forged ahead, 47-46, before Laszewski's jumper made it 49-46 with 5:15 left.

La Follette's familiar script began to unfold, and it started with two free throws by Amundson and an important follow shot by Brian Hinzman.

"You have to give the Big Eight (Conference) a lot of credit, and I believe that our kids profited from the outstanding competition. In my 23 years as coach, I don't believe it has ever been this tough from top to bottom. These kids gave it all they had, and they made believers out of me."